



To whom this may concern,

In 2014 my life changed drastically. A strange face sat in front of me saying strange words with so much urgency and concern. My 15-year-old self couldn't process the information I was given but I knew it wasn't good. I could take the pain, I could take the hospital visits, and even the medicine every morning but I couldn't come to terms with this disease being apart of my life forever. I was suffering more mentally than physically. I felt alone and didn't think anyone understood exactly what I was going through. I started to look for support groups for teens suffering from chronic illnesses and couldn't find any. This was concerning not only for me but my parents as well. We started to think how we were not educated on Lupus until I was diagnosed with it and we all witnessed firsthand how this disease affected us as a family.

About 5 million people worldwide suffer from some form of lupus. 16,000 new lupus cases emerge in the US annually. 90% of people suffering from lupus are women. Lupus is three times more common in African Americans than any other race. So what's next? What can we do to educate and help our community realize that Lupus is as pernicious as any other disease?

We were blessed to have a community of supporters and advocates. My mom being a salon owner in business for over 20 years in Newark, NJ, we knew we had to lean on our "village". Doctors, nurses, educators, friends, family, political figures, prayer warriors, and others helped our family get through those very tough years – and they're still in the fight with us. What I know for sure is not everyone is as fortunate to have a village like ours. That's how Applecake's Lupus Organization was born. Our family decided to host Newark, NJ's first Lupus walk on Sunday, May 27, 2018, at Branch Brook Park. 250 people came out to support a great cause that day, The year after that we almost doubled the amount of the year 2018. The same year of 2019 we put together Apple Cakes Lupus Organization's first annual party with a purpose, generating 1,000 to give to The Lupus Organization of America.

That being said our mission statement is to bring Lupus awareness and education to underserved communities by providing resources to individuals living with Lupus. Support includes lupus education, nutrition guidance, beauty, fitness, and teen support groups. The goal of the organization is to empower each person to continually pursue a lifestyle that will support their best self. My 22-year-old self has witnessed my community and family stand by my side by the support they have shown and willingness to be educated. But it doesn't stop there. We would like our city to grant Apple Cakes Lupus Organization permission to host a day in the month of May to honor Lupus awareness. If we don't fight, who will?

